35th Annual Report Relating to the ACM Risks Forum

For the Period 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019

Submitted by Peter G. Neumann

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After 34 years of annual reports for the ACM Committee on Computers and Public Policy (CCPP), with its primary public-facing entities -- notably the ACM Forum on Risks to the Public (`RISKS', which I began on 1 August 1985, at the request of ACM then president Adele Goldberg), and the Inside Risks series of 246 articles in the Communications of the ACM (which began in July 1990) -- these efforts evidently now report more directly to the ACM Council. This change was initiated informally by the current ACM President, Cherri Pancake, as part of a restructuring of the ACM committees during the 2018-2019

ACM year, under which CCPP was dissolved.

In that this is the first report to Council under the new structure, I am including some relevant historical background for those of you who might be unfamiliar. In addition to the ACM Risks Forum and the Inside Risks articles, I have contributed highlights from the online RISKS to each quarterly issue of the ACM SIGSOFT Software Engineering Notes (`SEN', for which I was the first editor, in 1976). My 1995 book, Computer-Related Risks, was drew heavily on materials from SEN and subsequently RISKS.

Perhaps surprisingly, many of the risks considered in the book are still with us today in one form or another, and have actually increased in frequency and impact.

During the 2018-2019 ACM reporting year, there were 57 issues (26 issues in Volume 30, and 31 issues in Volume 31) of the ACM Risks Digest, some much larger than in previous years (due to considerably more submissions, and my increased SRI workload). RISKS issues are available online at ftp.sri.com/risks/ and at risks.org (which redirects to a nicely formatted searchable site at the University of Newcastle in the UK, courtesy of Lindsay Marshall), as well as on USENET (via Panix); it is also mirrored elsewhere around the world. The extent of its readership is considerable, but not easy to estimate. It continues to get new subscribers, and has relatively fewer departures.

The CACM Inside Risks was initially a one-pager (on the Inside back page of the CACM, to add a pun to its identity as an Insider's view of Risks). The first 216 issues were monthly until June 2008, after which it has appeared as Viewpoint articles three times a year; the change was initiated by Moshe Vardi, who noted to me that the Inside Risks articles were the most popular in the CACM, and he wanted to use that space for other purposes. During the 2018-2019 reporting year, there were only two columns (primarily because the Cambridge UK co-authors of the second one for several months claimed they were all too busy to finish the draft we had intended for the February issue):

245: November 2018: Steven M. Bellovin and PGN, The Big Picture: A

 systems-oriented view of trustworthiness,

 <http://www.csl.sri.com/neumann/cacm245.pdf>

246: June 2019: A. Theodore Markettos, Robert N. M. Watson, Simon W. Moore,

 Peter Sewell, and PGN, Through Computer Architecture, Darkly: Total-system

 hardware and micro-architecture issues are becoming increasingly critical,

 CACM, June 2019 <http://www.csl.sri.com/neumann/cacm246.pdf>

These RISKS-related activities provide a highly visible public ACM activity (consistent with Adele Goldberg's original desire). They also serve vital educational roles, and provide useful resources for teachers, researchers, developers, and end-users.

My former CCPP steering committee consisted of Steve Bellovin, Peter Denning, Virgil Gligor, Kevin Fu, Nancy Leveson, David Parnas, Jerry Saltzer, Zeynep Tufekci, Lauren Weinstein, and Ben Zorn. Fortunately, they are all still present as extremely relevant and diverse advisors, primarily as a review board for potential Inside Risks articles.

Plans Through 30 June 2020

I expect to continue moderating the on-line ACM RISKS Forum, to commission and edit future Inside Risks columns, and to contribute quarterly to the SIGSOFT SEN, all closely related to the RISKS activity, as in the past 34 years.

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